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Hunt returns to testify in own behalf

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MIAMI

Convicted Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt returns to the witness stand on his own behalf today in his libel suit against an ultra-right weekly that linked him with the assassination of President John Kennedy.

Hunt, who served 33 months in prison for his part in the Watergate break-in, refuted charges Monday that he was in Dallas when Kennedy was assassinated 21 years ago. He said the August 1978 article by The Spotlight angered him because he thought allegations concerning the assassination were behind him.

"I was upset about it because I had been released from prison in 1977 (for Watergate) and here it was 1978 and the many accusations against me about my involvement in the Kennedy assassination had been put to rest, I thought," said Hunt.

Hunt also said his wife Dorothy had picked him up at his office in Washington minutes before Kennedy was shot. He said he heard about the shooting on a radio newscast while waiting in his car while his wife was shopping.

"We were going to have Chinese food that night and we went down to Sixth Street where most of the Chinese restaurants are so she could shop," he said. "I was seated in the car with my infant son when I first heard that Kennedy had been shot."

Hunt is suing the paper, a 360,000 circulation tabloid operated by the Washington-based Liberty Lobby for a published report written by former CIA agent Victor Marchetti that linked Hunt with the assassination.

Hunt's comments to the jury of four women and two men disputed remarks by defense attorney Mark Lane, who said he had a deposition from a former mistress of Cuban President Fidel Castro that placed Hunt in Dallas the day before the Kennedy assassination.

Lane said Marita Lorenz, who met Castro Jan. 1, 1959, was "running guns" to anti-Castro people in Miami for the CIA in 1963. In November of that year she was asked to go to Dallas as a decoy with members of the organization, Lane said.

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"They took two cars," he said. "One of them contained guns."

She said they arrived in Dallas Nov. 21, 1963. She said Hunt came to their hotel room and handed an envelope with money to Frank Sturgis, who also became part of the Watergate burglary.

Lane said Lorenz told them she no longer wanted to be involved in the arms deal and returned to Miami.

"She went to pick up her child and then to her mother's home in New York. The next day Kennedy was killed," said Lane. "Later she was told that the operation involved the Kennedy assassination."

Hunt's attorney William Snyder said the report by Marchetti was "reckless and malicious."

"Liberty Lobby published this article knowing it was false and probably not caring," said Snyder.

Hunt originally was awarded \$650,000 by a jury in the case, but that verdict was overturned on appeal because the judge's charge to the jury was flawed. In the first trial, the defense was unable to produce the CIA memo on which Marchetti allegedly based his article.

Lane said he has a deposition from another reporter who saw the memo. The Spotlight did nothing wrong by publishing the story because it contained information on opinions from sources about the assassination that Marchetti got during his research, he said.

Lane said Marchetti told the paper not to print a retraction, but Hunt was given a chance to be interviewed on his side of the story but declined.

"They published the article on their right to rely on Mr. Marchetti's research," he said. "Mr. Snyder says, 'Why didn't you ask the CIA?' Well, we can't even get the testimony Mr. Hunt gave before the House Select Committee on Assassinations."